DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 370 189 EA 025 820

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TITLE School Restructuring: A Study of the Role of Parents in Selected Accelerated Schools.
PUB DATE Nov 93
NOTE 39p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (22nd, New Orleans, LA, November 10-12, 1993). For related research papers, see ED 356 566-567.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Acceleration (Education); Administrator Effectiveness; Administrator Role; Elementary Education; Leadership Styles; *Parent Participation; *Parent Role; Principals; *School Restructuring
IDENTIFIERS *Accelerated Schools

ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings of a study that examined the change process involved when four elementary schools implemented the accelerated schools model. Specifically, the study focused on transitions in parental roles that occurred when the schools changed from a conventional mode of organization to a participatory mode. The case study data were obtained through document analysis and interviews conducted at each site with the principal, teachers, administrators, social workers, and parents. Findings indicate that the extent of change in the parents' roles varied substantially among the schools. Parental involvement increased when the principals used a less autocratic leadership style and when teachers encouraged parents and addressed their educational needs. Technical assistance by university faculty played a minor role in the transition process. Finally, creative communities of inquiry began to develop in three of the schools. One figure and one table are included. (LMI)

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School Restructuring: A Study of the Role of Parents in Selected Accelerated Schools

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association in New Orleans, LA, November 10, 1993.

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Abstract

This paper examines the change process that occurred in four elementary schools that moved from a conventional mode of school organization to a participatory mode of school organization by implementing the accelerated schools model. The analysis indicates that there was substantial variability among the schools in the extent of change in the role of the parents. The factors that appear to facilitate transitions in the parents' role include: 1) A relationship between the leadership style of the principal and parental involvement; 2) A relationship between the role of the teacher and parental involvement was also evident; and 3) Technical assistance from university faculty played a minor role in the change process in three of the schools.

INTRODUCTION

The accelerated schools process provides a systematic approach to the restructuring of schools that serve predominately at-risk students. Developed in 1986 by Henry M. Levin, Professor of Economics and Education at Stanford University, this strategy seeks to close the achievement gap for educationally disadvantaged elementary school students such that by the end of the elementary grades, they realize appropriate age/grade performance. The success of this project is closely linked to meaningful high levels of parent involvement, school-based management, innovative uses of community resources, and the development of a reliable mechanism of cooperative decision making. Implementation of the accelerated schools project requires that schools develop clearly delineated goals that are understood and agreed upon by parents, students, administrators, and teachers.

This paper examines school restructuring and the role of the parents based on an examination of four accelerated schools. Three began the accelerated schools restructuring process in the fall of 1990; the fourth began in the fall of 1989. The focus of the paper is on the factors that appear to facilitate transitions in the parents' role when a school takes on the formal philosophy and processes involved in becoming an accelerated school. The paper has six parts: 1) introduction; 2) background on the role of parents; 3) the accelerated schools process; 4) the research approach used in this study; 5) an analysis of the changes in the

role of parents and the factors that influenced these changes in the four schools; and 6) conclusions and implications.

BACKGROUND

The fact that the education reform movement of the 1980s, which emphasized excellent schools for the majority, and the equity movement are at odds is widely acknowledged (Boyd, 1989; Maeroff, 1988). In particular, the children of urban poverty have missed the benefits of the school reform movements of the 1980s. Maeroff observes: "Students in big cities suffer in ways that seem much more resistant to improvement than the educational woes of students in other settings" (p. 636). Thus, the reform movement of the 1980s may well have widened the gap between the haves and the have nots.

Levin (1988a) defines these have nots, or "at-risk" students as:

> Pupils who are defined as educationally disadvantaged or at risk lack the home and community resources to fully benefit from conventional school practices. Because of poverty, cultural differences, or linguistic differences, they tend to have low academic achievement and experience high secondary school drop-out rates. (p. 1)

If at-risk students cannot benefit fully from conventional schooling, then it follows that they can hardly benefit from reforms designed to improve the conventional approach. Levin (1988a) also points out that at-risk students "...are especially

concentrated among racial and ethnic minority groups, immigrants, language minorities, and economically disadvantaged populations" (p. 1), the very populations that are expected to grow as a percentage of the total population in the foreseeable future. Thus, it also follows that if schools are to serve better the growing at-risk student population, a different approach to school reform is needed: One that does not merely strengthen the tenets of conventional education--by moving back to the basics and increasing requirements--but that fundamentally changes the assumptions upon which schools for at-risk populations are based.

The accelerated schools movement provides a framework for such fundamental change. Accelerated schools concepts change the basic premises upon which education for the disadvantaged are based (Levin, 1988a, b; 1989). The traditional approach to educating at-risk students is to remediate, to pull students out of the classroom and give them "special" attention (Boyd, 1988, Levin, 1988a). The results of remediation are that the students who start behind their peers, fall further behind as they progress through school and are likely to drop out before they reach the end of high school. If these students manage to complete high school, they are, on average, four years behind their more advantaged counterparts.

The accelerates schools program takes a fundamentally different approach. It emphasizes acceleration rather than remediation of the educationally at-risk student. It also proposes a well-defined set of principles that, in combination, can

fundamentally change the operation of the schools where they are implemented.

THE ROLE OF THE PARENTS

Most educators contend that parental involvement is a key element in creating high quality schools with successful students. A review of 49 research studies suggest that even a modest degree of parent involvement pays off in higher student test scores, better grades, and improved attitudes toward learning (Henderson, 1987). Comer (1987) states that, "If fewer parents are intimidated or excluded from the work of schools, children at risk will have added resources, and school people will have added allies" (p. 15).

Often schools define parent involvement as participation in an organized PTA/O, participation in parent-teacher conferences, and/or volunteering in the classroom. Generally, schools only expectations for parents is that their children are sent to school adequately clothed, feed, and well rested. Parents are also expected to provide the child with the needed school supplies and to assist and/or monitor homework assignments.

In today's society, many children are not cared for or do not live with their parents. Thus, parental involvement often time includes more than the mother and/or father of the child. Accelerated school communities extend their conceptions of family involvement far beyond the margins of traditional school life. Accelerated school communities strive to include all parents and care-givers as vital participants in the daily workings of the school. In accelerated schools, family members are considered part

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of the solution to the problems of the students rather than part of the problem (Davidson, 1992).

The National Center for the Accelerated Schools Projects states that, "Accelerated schools begin by building on the strength that parents know and love their children" (p. 1). Accelerated schools give parents many opportunities to become involved by not only participating in the decision-making process, but also taking on responsibilities and leadership roles within the school. Parents can participate in the governance structure of the school by becoming members of the task forces or cadres and the Steering committee. The parental dimension can improve the capacity and effort of the child as well as increase the time devoted to academic learning and provide additional instructional resources in the home (Epstein, 1987). Comer (1987) notes that, "Appropriate parental involvement in schools prevents children from viewing learning as a value of the school but not a value of home and community and, therefore, as something that can be rejected easily" (p. 14).

THE ACCELERATED SCHOOLS PROCESS

Philosophy

At-riskness is not part of the student. Educationally at-risk students are the same as others (Levin, 1988b). Comer (1988) considers that, "...the contrast between a child's experiences at home and those in school deeply affects the child's psychosocial development, and that this in turn shapes academic achievement" (p. 43). Accelerated Schools overall goal is to eliminate this at-risk

situation and bring all students into the educational mainstream. Instead of viewing at-riskness as an internal trait, accelerated schools offer a different definition--that of a child being in an at-risk situation. Children are placed in an at-risk situation when there is a mismatch between the resources and experiences they get at home and expectations they find at school.

The accelerated schools philosophy is premised on the tenet that if a school is not good enough for the children of the school staff, it is not good enough for any child. This is the standard toward which all accelerated schools strive, to create their own dream school which they would want for their own children (Levin, 1988b).

Model

The transformation of a conventional school into an accelerated school involves its restructuring around three guiding principles of the model--unity of purpose, empowerment, and building on strengths (Levin, 1988a,b; 1989). Through these principles, a pedagogy evolves which considers the total learning environment.

Unity of purpose involves the development of a clear vision of the organizational and instructional framework required to bring students into the mainstream of education. The school's vision embodies the unified efforts of parents, teachers, and students around the realization of their common goals and endeavors.

Empowerment coupled with responsibility refers to an acknowledgment of parents', teachers', and students' capacity and

willingness to take responsibility for the educational process. This involves identifying needs, making decisions about how to address them, and accepting ownership of outcomes. One of the building blocks of the accelerated schools model is the expanded role of all groups to participate in and take responsibility for the educational process and educational results. In accelerated schools, administrative roles are redefined to include input from parents, teachers, and students.

Building on strengths is a continual process of identifying and utilizing all available human resources within the school and its community. In this process the opportunities for maximal parent, student, teacher, and administrator demonstration of individual talents is crucial.

The principles and practices of accelerated schools are supported by a set of values and beliefs that create a visible attitude that is necessary to develop the culture of achievement and human-resource building. Hopfenberg, Levin, Miester, and Rogers (1990) describe these values as the following:

Equity. All students can learn and have a right to the best possible education.

Participation. Children participate in learning; teachers participate in decision-making; parents participate in school decisions.

Communication/Community. Students learn through active group activities. School and community work towards a

shared purpose by meeting, talking, and learning from each other.

Reflection. Students engage in problem-solving and more interpretive approaches to curricula; teachers and parents constantly scrutinize the world of the school and address challenges to improve it.

Experimentation. Teachers implement experimental programs as a result of communicating about and reflecting upon the school's problems; students are involved in discovery exercises.

Trust. Teachers, parents, administrators, and students must believe in each other and focus on each other's strengths.

Risk-taking. All parties must be more entrepreneurial in their efforts. While some new programs may fail, the ones that succeed are the key to lasting school improvement. (p. 12)

To support these, accelerated schools are organized into a definite governance structure which ensures the optimal achievement of the school's vision and goals through total access, open participation, and a continual flow of information. They must, however, retain sufficient flexibility to facilitate periodic self-assessment and modification (Levin, 1989). These schools employ a tri-level governance model consisting of cadres, a steering committee, and the school-as-a-whole.

Insert figure 1 about here

Cadres are small working groups of teachers, support staff, and parents who meet weekly to address weaknesses and priority areas of the school's vision. Typical areas include school community relations, curriculum, school climate, discipline, and parental involvement.

The Steering Committee is the intermediate governing body of the school and consists of the principal and a representative from each cadre. Parents, students, and central office personnel may also be members of the Steering Committee. The purpose of this group is to coordinate the efforts of the various groups and to develop recommendations that will be presented to the school-as-a-whole. All decisions concerning the school go to the Steering Committee.

The School-as-a-whole is involved in the discussion and decision-making process. Consensus among members (teachers, parents, administrators) is essential, especially in decisions regarding the arenas of curriculum, instruction, and allocation of resources.

RESEARCH APPROACH

All four of the schools used in the study were into the restructuring process at the time of the site visits in the spring of 1991. Three of the schools visited were nearing completion of their first year of the process, and entering the inquiry (or

implementation) stage. The fourth school was ending its second year and had one year experience with the new environment.

The case study research method was used for this study. Case study research involves an assortment of research methodologies, including interviews, direct observations, document reviews, archival records, participant observation, and surveys. The specific approaches used to collect and analyze information on the four schools is discussed below.

Data Sources

Institutional documents were collected and analyzed. Documents such as test scores, attendance records, parental involvement and attendance at meetings, memoranda, administrative documents, grant applications, vision statements, surveys, and brainstorming papers were utilized in the change process. These documents were also examined in the case study.

Direct interviews were conducted at each school site, including teachers, administrators (principals and assistant principals), and others (e.g. social workers and parents). The principal of each of the schools was consulted to identify the parents and teachers to be interviewed. An attempt was made to talk to people who both supported and resisted the change process. An interview guide used for the study asked questions about: a) The status of each school before the implementation of the accelerated schools concept or change process; b) the status of the school at the time of the interviews; and c) the factors that

facilitated or inhibited change in the schools. A total of 35 people were interviewed for the study.

The questions solicited information about the status of the school before the restructuring process and at the time of the site visit, as well as about factors that influence the change process. Questions about histories and current status of the school considered five dimensions: a) relations with the central office; b) the role of the principal; c) the role of teachers; d) the role of parents and the community; and e) pedagogical processes in the school. This paper focuses on the interaction between parents and the school in the restructuring process. However, changes in all of the factors have been analyzed (Davidson, 1992) and will be discussed as they pertain to the topics of the paper.

Field notes were taken during the interviews and most of the interviews were taped. After each interview, a written record was made of each session, using a method recommended by Lofland and Lofland (1984). These records contained: a) Summaries and notes of what was said; b) recorded transcription of important responses, c) notes on methodology, and d) personal emotional experiences. Each taped interview was typed verbatim and the transcript was sent to the interviewee for review and verification of facts.

Case studies were developed and analyzed for each of the schools (Davidson, 1992). The names of the schools and interviewees were changed in order to disguise the real identities. Names were disguised to assure openness. Disguising was also

important because the analyses critically examined the extent of change in each school and the reasons why change occurred.

Analysis Methods

Two analysis methods were used. First, a continuum was developed to assess the extent of change in the role of parents. One side of the continuum (the left) represented the characteristics of the traditional mode of school organization: Relationships with parents primarily focused on treating parents as the cause of problems. The other side of the continuum (the right) represented the extreme characteristics of the accelerated schools model: Relationships with parents was based on treating parents as part of the solution. Each side of the continuum was further divided into "extreme" and "moderate," indicating degree of the characteristics of either end of the continuum. The middle quatrain of each continuum was considered neutral. For example, the extreme left quatrain would assume virtually all the characteristics of the top-down mode.

Judgments were made about quatrains on the continuum based on the following criteria:

1. Does the school have an active PTA/O that is involved in more than just fund raising?

2. Were there parent volunteers working in various capacities in the school?

3. Did a high percentage of parents that come to parent/teacher conferences?

4. Was there a working relationship between the parents and the Principal?

These questions were used to assess the place a school fell on each continuum. The status of the school was assessed at two points: 1) before the accelerated schools process, and 2) at the time of the site visits. Judgments were made based on the responses of teachers that had been members of the faculty prior to the adoption of the process. The continuum was used to assess the extent of change in the role of parents based on teachers recollections. Interview results are presented to illustrate the judgments used to place schools on the continuum.

Second, analyses of other factors included in the full study (Davidson, 1992) are reexamined here to determine which factors influenced change in the role of parents in these schools. The other four factors were analyzed using a similar methodology to the one developed for parents. The results of these other analyses are only discussed as they pertain to changes in the role of parents.

ANALYSIS

This analysis focuses on change in the role of parents in the four accelerated schools. The analysis is presented in four parts: 1) overview of the schools; 2) the initial role of parents; 3) the current role of parents, focusing on the extent of change; and 4) factors influencing change.

Each of the schools is located in urban public school system in the South or Southwest sections of the United States. Two are located in the same large urban district (Griswald and McBride

Schools); one in a medium-sized urban district in the same Southern state (Forest School); and one in a suburban district adjacent to another large urban center in a Southwestern state (Cedarcrest School).

The Schools

Three schools--Forest, Griswald, and McBride--were in the initial phase of implementing the accelerated schools concept. They were selected because the researcher had the opportunity to study them as part of the University of New Orleans Accelerated Schools Project. One of the schools (Cedarcrest) was selected because it was considered an exemplary accelerated school by national experts. It was completing the second year of the process.

Cedarcrest Elementary School is part of the Alamo Heights Independent School District in a large metropolitan city in the Southwest section of the United States. The majority of the district is made up of middle to upper class families. Alamo Heights has a reputation of being a private school district for upper class, anglo children. Cedarcrest School is separated from the other schools in this affluent district by a railroad track and a freeway, or in the words of the Principal, "...a double barrier." At the time Cedarcrest was constructed, the neighborhood consisted of middle class homes with an enrollment of 99% white and 01% Hispanic.

The demographics of Cedarcrest changed when the large, tree covered area in front of the school was converted into a vast

apartment complex thus increasing the number of school age children living in the Cedarcrest district. Due to age and deterioration, the apartments have become government-subsidized, low income housing. More than 90% of the students in these complexes come from Hispanic immigrant families. More than 91% of the students are on the free or reduced lunch and breakfast program at school. Spanish is the first language for most of the families living in the complexes and many students enter school speaking no English. The students were performing in the bottom 25th percentile on district administered standardized tests.

Allison Agnew became Principal of Cedarcrest Elementary School in the Fall of 1988. She became interested in the accelerated schools model after reading an article by Henry M. Levin, Professor of Education and Economics at Stanford University. Ms. Agnew shared the information with the members of her teaching staff in the Spring of 1989. Prior to the opening of the 1989-1990 school year, the teachers voted to implement the project.

The student population of Cedarcrest for the 1990-1991 school year was 989. The faculty consisted of 70 teachers, two Assistant Principals, and a Principal. The ethnic breakdown of the student body was 78% Hispanic, 11% white, 5% black, 5% Asian, and 1% others.

Forest Elementary School was built in 1955 in the architectural style of the period. A member of the Tanglewood Independent School District, Forest is located in a large metropolitan city in the Southern region of the United States. The

school community consists of single family residences, the majority with incomes below the poverty level. Ninety-eight percent of the student body participated in the free or reduced lunch program for the 1990-1991 school year. During the same school year, Forest had a population of 401 students in grades pre-kindergarten through fifth grade with a faculty of 20 teachers, a principal, a secretary, 13 ancillary teachers, eight aides, five cafeteria employees, and three janitorial workers. Racially, the school population consisted of all black students with the exception of 10 white children.

Marilyn Hasie became Principal of Forest Elementary School in 1983. Forest, like Cedarcrest, implemented the accelerated schools concept on its own initiative. A member of the Advisory Council of Forest School introduced the Council to the project through a brochure published by the Stanford University Accelerated Schools Project. At the directive of the District Office, an Advisory Council was created to offer recommendations to enhance and support the positive academic growth of the school. On May 23, 1990, the Council voted to implement the accelerated schools concept at Forest. Two of the Chapter 1 teachers assigned to Forest were instructed to write a grant to fund the project. The grant was funded and Forest began executing the project in the Fall of 1990. Thus, in the initial phase of implementing the accelerated schools process, Forest Elementary School was selected for the present study.

Griswald Elementary School and McBride Elementary School were selected by a Committee to participate in the accelerated schools project. The Committee consisted of three professors from the College of Education's Leadership and Foundations Department at the University of New Orleans and members of a large urban public school system. These two schools began the initial phase in the Fall of 1990 and were also selected for the present study.

Dedication ceremonies were held on February 15, 1939, for the building that currently houses Griswald Elementary School. The school is located in the inner or metro section of a large metropolitan city in the Southern part of the United States. The community consists of single family residences with incomes that fall in the low income bracket. The student population of Griswald, for the 1990-1991 school year, was 320 with a faculty of 24 teachers and a Principal. The ethnic background of the student population was 100% black. Grades pre-kindergarten through sixth are taught in the school. In the Fall of 1989, William Brewer became Principal of Griswald School.

John P. McBride Elementary School, a member of the Lake View Independent School District, is situated on a 7.15 acre site in a suburban area of a large metropolitan city in the Southern region of this country and opened its doors in 1959. The setting of the school provides for an unusual degree of quiet and privacy and is compatible with house designs in the area. Homes in the area are primarily privately-owned, single-family dwellings. For the 1990-1991 school year, the enrollment of McBride School was 406 in

grades pre-kindergarten through sixth. Of these, 60% qualified for free lunch, 12% received reduced priced lunch, and 28% paid the full price for lunch. The ethnic composition of the student body was 99.09% black and .01% white. The faculty consisted of a Principal, a secretary, 15 regular classroom teachers, nine Special Education teachers, nine support personnel, six paraprofessionals, and nine custodial and lunchroom personnel. Ruth Oliver became the Principal of McBride School in the Fall of 1980.

The Initial State of the Schools

Parental involvement was considered by all interviewees as a major deficit in each of the four schools. This lack of interest and participation on the part of parents justified placement of all four schools in the extreme quatrain on the left side of the continuum.

The teachers that taught at Cedarcrest during all or part of the years Gail Benjamin was Principal stated that her intimating and authoritarian management style did not encourage parents to participate in the operation of the school. The PTA at Cedarcrest School was run by a very small, "elite" group of parents that lived in the section of single family homes. Parental and community volunteers did not exist. The Hispanic mothers and fathers were intimated by the atmosphere of the school as they, for the most part, lived in the large apartment complexes surrounding the school. Many of the families did not speak English. One of the teachers at Cedarcrest explained the feelings of those families when she stated, "They would hang around the doors. Watching from

the outside. It really was--watching from the outside and looking in and feeling that they couldn't come in here."

The teachers interviewed that taught at McBride before the accelerated schools process explained that parental involvement had declined at the school for two reasons. First, as Margaret Wheat noted, "...now we start getting [students] from out of this community. Before, most of the parents were right here in this community."

The second reason for the decrease of involvement was as Cora Ford explained, "...the parents may feel like the teachers don't need their help. So we're getting a lot of that now and they just don't come out to help."

The interviewed members of the Forest faculty that had taught at the school for a number of years agreed that, as one teacher stated, "There was very little involvement [on the part of the parents]. And when there was involvement, it was very tense. It was kind of a lack of respect and trust. Mrs. Hasie was very aloof to the parents." Another teacher noted that, "...the main problem is most of the children, the majority of them don't have any help at home." A third teacher summed up the problem when she explained, "...the parents here need more education. A lot of them don't have the resources to do a lot." The parents in the Forest community lacked the necessary skills to assist the school in the education of their children. Thus, the majority of the parents chose not to take an active part in the activities of the school.

The decline in parental involvement at Griswald School began with the departure of the Principal, Dr. Carver. During his leadership, several programs were in place that motivated parents to become involved in school activities. As a first grade teacher explained, "Parent involvement was good....we had family/parent breakfasts once a month...parent workshops....a good PTA....room mothers."

Status of Schools at the Time of the Site Visit

There was a great deal of variation in the role of parents at the time of the site visit. The teachers, assistant principal, and principal interviewed at Cedarcrest indicated that enormous strides had been made in promoting parental involvement in the school community. The faculty of Cedarcrest School recognized the needs and developed programs to educate the parents as well as the students. Through the Gente a Gente (People to People) program, parents were able to obtain needed skills and information to improve their daily lives as well as assist and support the education of their children. The Parenting Center provided another avenue for the parents to share their talents with and gain new information from the school. Cedarcrest secured a grant to provide a Parent University. Courses were designed for parents to enable them to build a "bridge to the middle class." One course taught the parents to speak English, a second course provided the skills to pass the naturalization test, and a third course furnished the necessary information to assist the parents in passing a test to obtain a Graduate Education Degree. For the first PTA meeting of

the 1989-1990 school year, the Principal, Allison Agnew, requested that the custodial staff place 250 chairs in the cafetorium. Thirty-five parents came to fill those chairs. At the PTA kick-off meeting the following year, 670 parents attended.

Members of a local civic group organized a beautification project for the school grounds. All supplies were donated and members of the school community--students, teachers, parents, administrators, staff, and neighbors--worked together to complete the project. In light of these changes, the judgment was made that the characteristics at Cedarcrest matched those of the extreme quatrain on the "Parents as part of the solution" side of the continuum.

Parental participation at McBride, as the Principal and each interviewed teacher verbalized, had improved due to the implementation of the accelerated schools model. The parade and social, planned by the Parental Involvement Cadre, became the vehicle to notify the school community of the accelerated schools process occurring at McBride School. Both of these events peaked the interest of the parents, grandparents, and community members and brought them into the school. The PTA became revitalized due to an enthusiastic President. The Parent Involvement Cadre was in the process of organizing a Dad's Club. These efforts correspond with the features of the moderate quatrain on the right side of the continuum.

A transformation did occur in the area of parental involvement at Forest though not as dramatic as the events at Cedarcrest and

McBride. Parents became members of the Advisory Council. The issue of educating the parents was addressed by a series of workshops designed and executed by the Chapter 1 teachers and by the establishing of the Parenting Center in the library.

The Lyons Club, a community organization, adopted Forest School and organized a barbecue to raise funds to air condition the cafeteria. The entire school community became involved in the project. The endeavors to involve, as well as educate, the parents and community of Forest School corresponds with the features of the neutral quatrain on the continuum.

All of the teachers interviewed at Griswald School indicated that the communication problems existing between the faculty and the Principal also existed between the Principal and the parents. As one teacher explained, "They [the parents] also feel that they're not wanted. I think there is a lot of anger and hostility within the parents." This viewpoint agrees with the characteristics of the extreme quatrain on the "Parents as cause of problem" side of the continuum.

ANALYSIS OF THE CHANGES

Table 1 depicts the change in the role of parental involvement before the accelerated schools process (bracketed "1") and at the time of the site visits (bracketed "2").

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The implementation of the accelerated schools process created a change in three of the schools--Forest, McBride, and Cedarcrest--within the context of the role of parental involvement. Forest School recognized the problems that stemmed from lack of parental involvement and established and executed a series of activities focused on strengthening that segment of the school community. Endeavors such as parental representation on the Advisory Council; the workshops focusing on parenting skills; the Parenting Center; and the fund raising barbecue produced positive feedback and enhanced the relationship between the school, the parents, and the community.

The accelerated schools process also produced changes at McBride in the area of parental involvement. The faculty recognized the lack of support and need for improvement in this area. The parade and social succeeded in attracting the attention of the entire school community and resulted in a number of parents signing up to volunteer in the school. The pending formation of the Dad's Club was another effort to utilize the talents of the school family.

The efforts of the faculty at Cedarcrest created spectacular changes in the link between the school and the parents. The approaches used to improve the relationships were right on the mark and resulted in establishing an outstanding bond between the school and the parents. For example, the Gente a Gente program provided essential everyday knowledge and skills for the parents; the Parenting Center made the parents feel welcome, included, and a

part of the school itself; and the landscaping project united the more affluent part of the school community with the apartment dwellers. The forthcoming Parent University will attempt to supply information to help parents assist their children with homework and school projects and to provide a knowledge base for the parents.

At the fourth school, Griswald, the interviewees emphasized that the process brought into focus the need for parents to be involved in the school and also highlighted the lack of support on the part of the Griswald parents. The parents of Griswald students did not feel welcome or a part of the school. The Principal was unable to assume the role of facilitator between the teachers and the parents. Rather than exhibiting an attitude that would encourage the parents to come into the school, Mr. Brewer displayed a posture that stimulated anger and hostility within the parents. All of the teachers interviewed verbalized that the lack of support from the parents was due to the fact that the Principal, as one teacher stated, "...will not deal with them and he is very rude and abrupt."

The implementation of the accelerated schools project created a change in the attitude and participation of the parents at Forest School. As a result of the change, several parents were asked to serve on the Advisory Council, the educational workshops for parents were well attended, and the fund raising project--the barbecue--to procure funds to air condition the cafeteria drew large support from the business and school community.

McBride also saw a resurgence of parental involvement motivated by the parade and social. The anticipated formation of the Dad's Club was a direct result of the attempt on the part of some of the parents to bring the school community back into active participation with the students and faculty.

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCED CHANGES

There was evidence from the case studies that three factors combined to influence--facilitate or inhibit--change in the role of parents in the schools. The summary analysis of these factors, presented below, is based on an in depth analysis of each of these factors (Davidson, 1992).

Factor # 1. There was evidence of a relationship between the leadership style of the principal and parental involvement, at least in the accelerated schools process. The principals and their capacity to change their leadership styles was an important factor in changing the role of parents. The three schools that had evidence of change in the role of the principal also exhibited major changes in parental involvement.

Two of the schools--Griswald and Cedarcrest--had new principals who initiated the process. Griswald, which exhibited no change in the role of parental involvement, had a principal with an authoritarian approach, who seemed unable to change his style, even with coaching from university faculty who provided technical assistance. This attitude resulted in teachers and parents becoming malevolent because they were restrained in their attempts

to implement a process that they believed would raise the academic performance levels of their students.

Cedarcrest, where the most change in the role of parental involvement occurred, also had a new principal who initiated the process. However, Allison Agnew, seemed to have a deep personal commitment to parental participation which was recognized by the entire school community. As a result, the released creativity and enthusiasm of the teachers, students, and parents allowed innovative and exciting changes to occur in the structure of the school.

The other two schools had long-term principals who had previously functioned in an autocratic leadership style. At Forest, Marilyn Hasie found this a difficult transition. A motivated and dedicated teacher assumed the role of facilitator and inspired the faculty to move toward acceleration. The faculty addressed the needs of the education the parents through workshops, a parenting center, and involvement in a fund raising activity. This movement motivated the Principal to make some changes in her leadership style resulting in a less rigid attitude toward the parents.

In contrast, at McBride, Ruth Oliver had been looking for an opportunity to change the school and readily embraced the accelerated schools concepts. The enthusiasm she exhibited for the process motivated the faculty to initiate several programs that renewed parental interest in the school. As one teacher noted, "And here lately, they found out that we do need them. You know,

they're coming around a little more since we're in the accelerated schools program."

Thus, the style of the principal seems critical to encouraging parental involvement. But it is not necessary to assign a new principal to a school, if a principal is willing to make a change. However, it is difficult to judge whether a principal is really willing, or just says s/he is willing to make a change. Griswald School was selected for the accelerated schools project because the principal appeared to be very supportive of the principles. However, parents and teachers indicated he did not have an empowering approach to the project.

Factor # 2. A relationship between the role of the teacher and parental involvement was also evident. As teachers and parents became more secure in their new roles and the cadres became engaged in inquiry about how to improve the school, plans for meaningful change began to develop. The focus of the change process within the context of these two variables was three fold in three of the schools--Forest, McBride, and Cedarcrest. First, the faculty was able to bring family members into the school to become actively involved in the education of their children. Second, the teachers addressed the educational needs of the parents. Activities such as the parenting centers at Forest and Cedarcrest, the educational workshops at Forest, the Dad's Club at McBride, and the Cedarcrest Gente a Gente program and Parent University served to provide information and to improve the knowledge base of the parents.

Third, the landscaping project at Cedarcrest, the social and parade at McBride, and the barbecue at Forest drew the parents, the broader school neighborhood, and the business community together and provided tangible evidence of active support.

A positive relationship was established between the teachers and a segment of the parent population at Griswald School due to the implementation of the accelerated schools process. Yet very little progress was made in establishing a meaningful change in parental involvement. The teachers and parents at Griswald School did not feel that the Principal, Mr. Brewer, was supportive in their efforts to implement the change process. As a result, the sense of trust and shared decision making that should exist for the accelerated schools process to work was not established between the Principal and the school community.

Culbert and McDonough (1985) note that trust is "...the fundamental cement that binds an organization together, facilitating good communication, rectifying badly timed actions, making goal attainment possible, and creating the conditions for organizational success" (Keith & Girling, 1991, p. 72). As one teacher explained, "If he [Mr. Brewer] doesn't approve it, it doesn't happen. Although the cadre has planned and made the suggestions, and they are willing to work with him, and everyone is willing, Mr. Brewer's not willing. So how do we operate that way?" William Brewer believed that the teachers "...did not have the skill that is required to efficiently implement the change

process." He was not able to develop a working relationship with the school community.

Factor # 3. Technical assistance from university faculty played a minor role in the change process in three of the schools. Cedarcrest initiated the accelerated schools process without assistance from university consultants. After its success with test score improvements, accelerated schools specialists at a local university learned about the school, visited the school, and this, Cedarcrest illustrates that schools can restructure without outside help. Faculty at the other three schools were trained in a university based program and were given technical assistance with the implementation of the process. In interviews, teachers indicated this university support was helpful. However, the success of the schools was variable. And the university consultants had little influence on the predispositions of the principals. Three principals espoused belief and were open to coaching. However, the one principal who had a less open attitude toward teachers and parents, was also reluctant to use coaching from the university. Therefore, technical assistance by university specialists can help with the transition to the accelerated model, but it does not guarantee success.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATION

This initial study of the implementation of the accelerated schools process in a select group of schools illustrates that: 1) The leadership style of the principal can foster parental

involvement; and 2) Creative communities of inquiry began to develop in three of the schools.

The results of the study illustrates the current focus of the literature today. Sergiovanni (1992) notes that, "The more professionalism is emphasized, the less leadership is needed. The more leadership is emphasized, the less likely it is that professionalism will develop" (p. 42). The principals, and their capacity to change their leadership styles, was probably the most important single factor in the success of the accelerated schools process in the four schools. Meaning changes took place in the three schools where the principals supported empowerment and shared decision-making at more than an espoused level.

The experiences of teachers and parents help them to judge whether principals really believe in empowerment. If they do not, teachers and parents find out very quickly and do not take risks. However, if the principal's approach to empowerment is genuine, then teachers and parents can begin to take the risks necessary to change their roles in schools. As David (1989) notes, "...without autonomy, shared decision making has little meaning" (p. 46).

Research on organizational effectiveness suggests that creating communities of inquiry may help to make long-term gains in organizational effectiveness and to transform dysfunctional patterns in organizations (Argyris, Putnam & Smith, 1987). The results of the study indicates evidence of an essential aspect of meaningful school-based inquiry. There was substantial evidence that a sense of community was developing among the teachers and

parents in three of the four schools used in the study. A few such examples have already been discussed.

Parental involvement represents a major challenge to an accelerated school. Parental participation such as volunteering at school functions, membership in the PTA/O, providing financial support, are as needed in schools for at-risk populations as they are in schools that serve the middle class. Yet this approach in not sufficient if the school is to have a long term influence on educational attainment by at-risk students. Long term influence requires that the accelerated schools process have an impact on the home environment of the child and that processes in the school positively influence parents to become involved in their children's education. If parents become involved in their children's educational processes, then they are more likely to expect their children to attend college and their children are more likely to aspire to attain a college education (Hossler & Stage, 1988).

Further, universities can provide training and technical assistance which help facilitate the empowerment process. However, other forces in schools can inhibit change, even if university assistance is provided. And there is no guarantee that university facilitators have the person skills and knowledge that can actually help schools with this difficult change process. The craft of facilitating school restructuring needs to be refined, both by school leaders and outside facilitators, including university

faculty. Thus, there is a clear need for continued inquiry into how change in leadership can best be fostered.

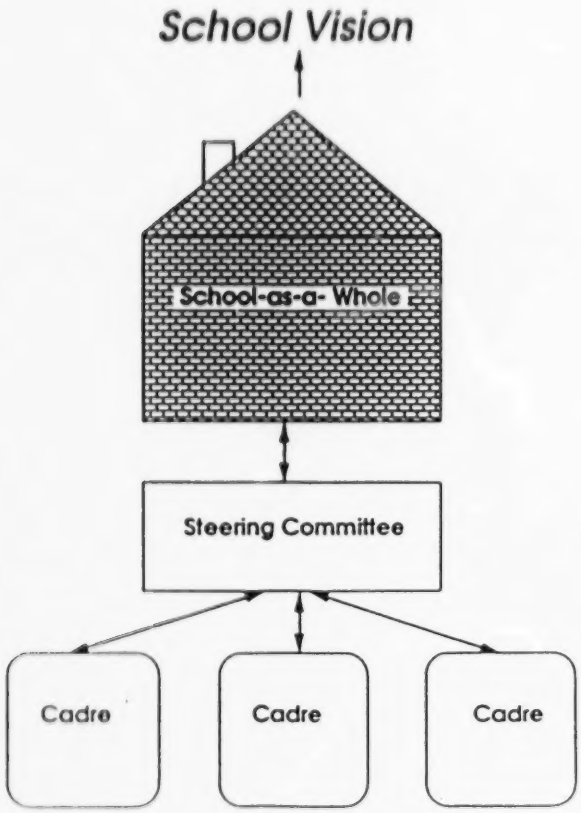
Table 1

Assessing the Extent of Change
in the Role of Parental Involvement

Parents treated as cause of problem				Parents treated as part of solution
Extreme	Moderate	Neutral	Moderate	Extreme
Cedarcrest (1)				→ Cedarcrest (2)
Forest (1)			→	Forest (2)
McBride (1)				→ McBride (2)
Griswald (1), (2)				

Figure 1

Accelerated Governance Structures



Note. From Accelerated Schools Training Manual, 402 S CERAS, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305-3084.

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